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Brief Research Report: *A study of willingness to participate in the development of a global human community*

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Introduction

In this brief report, we present research on the readiness of a sample of American adults to become members of a global community. Our interest on this was stimulated by a prior publication (Deutsch, Marcus, and Brazitis, 2015) which stressed the importance of developing a global community to deal with such global problems as: climate change; war, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction; global economic disruptions; disease pandemics and others. These problems will require effective global cooperation if they are to be managed well. One critical social psychological problem is developing the widespread, salience of our interdependence with all others on the planet.

Prior research into the meaning of a global identity has established that identification with all humanity is a viable construct that predicts concern for human rights and humanitarian needs, and is distinct from the absence of ethnocentrism and in group favoritism (McFarland, Webb and Brown, 2012). Similarly, theorizing and research on the constructs of moral inclusion and expanding the scope of justice (see Opatow, 2012) point to the possibility that humans can extend support for the values inherent in our global interdependence; that by

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expanding our scope of justice by including all humanity, we make our global interdependence more salient.

The link between values inherent in one's commitment to the global community and actions in support of that commitment points us to work on the critical link between attitudes and behavior and the mediating effect of goals (see, for example, Kruglanski, Jaski, Chernikova, Milyavsky, Babish Baldner and Peirro 2015). Here we must ask what behaviors and actions may support one's expressions of the values of commitment to a global community? Research on the psychological sense of global community links this construct to human rights attitudes and behaviors (Hackett, Amoto, Matthews, 2015). This sense (PSGC), was found to play an important mediating role in connecting self-transcendent values (eg, equality, social justice) with attitudes and behaviors that support human rights issues. In other words, holding strong self-transcendent values and feeling connected to a global community increases the likelihood that one will be concerned with and take actions supportive of human rights. Their research has important implications connecting global identity with actions. Furthermore, research by Buchan, Brewer, Grimalda, Wilson, Fatas and Foddy (2011), looked across six different countries on five continents to understand the connection between global identity and cooperative action. Findings emerged that demonstrated the power of global identity to predict behavior for which reciprocity is not expected. In other words, global identity can inspire cooperative behavior beyond self-interest.

The current study explored five areas:

1. The characteristics of individuals and their willingness to commit or not, to the development of a global community;
2. Their reasons for making or not making the commitment to take action;
3. The types of actions people may take to support their commitment;
4. Perceived barriers to action; and
5. Ways to overcome the barriers, or change one's mind and make commitment to take action.

To answer these questions, a message was formulated, Imagine a Global Human Community, to invite people to become active members of the global human community. The statement is drawn from the values expressed in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and FDR's statement of the Four Freedoms. The statement is an invitation that respondents may accept or decline. Imagine a Global Human Community also provides an opportunity to make a commitment to take action which also may be accepted or declined. In either case, it is useful to understand why and how one might make this commitment or not. What might be some of the barriers to accepting this invitation and making this commitment? What might be some reasons and individual characteristics that may contribute to making this commitment? Are some groups more or less willing to make such a commitment? Our research seeks to begin to answer these questions.

Methodology²

² All of the instrumentation and statistical analyses are available by contacting the first author at emarcus@newhaven.edu.

Participants were drawn from among those included in Survey Monkey Audience, a panel comprising over one million US citizens 18 years of age and older. Survey Monkey Audience recruits participants to take surveys on behalf of the clients of Survey Monkey and for each completed survey a donation is made to the respondent's charity of choice and along with an entry into an instant win sweepstakes.

Sample: The results presented are based on completed questionnaires from 610 US citizens over age 18 gathered during the first part of July, 2014. It is not a sampling representative of the US population; nevertheless, it enables some basic demographic comparisons. Our final sample is comprised of 47% males, 57% age 40 and older; and in terms of educational level: 67% had some college or more.

Instruments: We used one primary instrument for this study. The instrument began with brief background information on our purpose, and asked respondents to read the statement:

Imagine a Global Human Community. Responses ("Yes" "No" or "Maybe") to the first question (*"Are you willing to be a member of such a global human community?"*), determined what happened next. Those answering Yes, thereby indicating that they were willing to make the commitment to take action received questions asking them their reasons, actions they may take, barriers to action and ways to overcome such barriers. Those answering "No" or "Maybe" were asked, similarly, their reasons for answering no or maybe, what is preventing them from doing so and what might change their mind and make the commitment .

Results

Data were analyzed using participants' response to their willingness or not of being a member of a global human community. Responses to this were used as our dependent variable to identify those demographic characteristics that differentiate whether or not one willing to join such a global community. Open ended questions were content analyzed to identify themes and categories in the context in which they were mentioned (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Our aim was to discover the main categories of responses.³

1. Demographic Characteristics and Willingness to commit or not: Overall, over two thirds, or 70% of our respondents, were willing to be a member of the global human community; 30% answered "unwilling," or "maybe". Significant differences were found between those people who are willing to commit and those who are either not willing or not sure they are willing to commit to a Global Human Community in all demographic and attitudinal variables, except for self-efficacy. Those who indicated being more liberal leaning ($p < .0001$), more educated ($p < .0001$), more optimistic ($p < .003$), younger ($p < .01$), and from more economically comfortable backgrounds ($p < .041$), and with a perceived positive personal economic outlook ($p < .021$) were more likely to indicate their commitment to be part of a global human community.

An important finding is that across all variables well over half of *all* respondents indicated that they were willing to commit themselves to be active members of the global community: Republicans as well as Democrats; the poor as well as the rich, older people as well as younger ones; those with much education as well as those with less education; those optimistic about the future as well as those who are pessimistic; those more liberal leaning as

³ For each open ended question, content coding allowed for multiple mentions and therefore add to greater than 100%.

well as those identifying themselves as conservative. Thus, while statistically significant differences exist, there is an overall strong level of support for making this commitment.

2. Reasons for making or not making the commitment to take action:

For those willing to make the commitment to take action, the most common reasons given connected to the larger interests of the community, society or world (37%). Other commonly mentioned reasons related to one's beliefs in the concept, in the rightness of the commitment (33%); and also for personal reasons such as enhancing their own and/or their relatives' wellbeing (19%).

Among those unwilling to join, the most common reasons given were lack of time (44%) and, lack of self efficacy or the sense that doing so will not lead to positive change (34%), and, not knowing what action one might take was offered by almost a third (31%) of those unwilling to make the commitment.

3. Types of Actions taken to support one's commitment: We coded the open ended responses by level of action (personal, community, national, and global). Overall, the majority of actions that people might take are personal in nature (87% of mentions), and relate to how one treats others (eg, *Resolve all personal conflicts with others in a peaceful manner*), as separate from community based actions (11%) (eg, *buy local*), and under 2% for national and global combined.

4. Perceived supports and barriers to action: We also asked these respondents to indicate what might help them in carrying out their commitment to action. Results indicate that increased knowledge of both organizations (60%) and potential actions (60%) would be

beneficial. Keeping informed of actions that others are taking (62%) and being able to keep in contact with others through the internet (50%) were other frequently mentioned supports needed by those interested in joining.

One of the primary barriers to action is lack of social support, with 37% mentioning this. Included in this category were responses such as: *others may not accept my beliefs and actions; I will have a hard time standing up against thousands who disapprove of my thoughts,* and *some people will disagree*. Participants also mentioned other obstacles such as personal factors (22%) including time, money, and personal circumstances and 12% indicated societal factors such as political climate, or beliefs held by society at large.

5. Ways to overcome the barriers, or change one's mind and make commitment to take action:

Respondents who mentioned facing obstacles were asked about ideas for overcoming those obstacles. Almost half (47%) mentioned overcoming self imposed obstacles including time and money, being more committed, self aware, open minded and similar ideas. One fourth of respondents (25%) suggested that actions from others might enable them to overcome their obstacles: These included *support from others, joining together with others, having more organizational support, even ignoring others who are not supportive* are examples of their ideas.

Importantly, 70% of those unwilling to make the commitment or to take action (the "No" or "Maybe" group), indicated that they might change their mind if they know more about possible actions they could take. Almost one fourth (24%) of the "No" or "Maybe" group suggested that feelings of hope rather than cynicism might enable them to take action. And

finally, 18% said that they might change their mind if someone important to them asked them to make such a commitment or take action.

Discussion

Overall the results of this research are suggestive of many additional areas for both research and action. First, it is important to note that the majority of our sample expressed interest and commitment to the values embodied by the values of a global community and are interested in taking action to support their commitment to it. That is, while there were differences between Republicans and Democrats, between older and younger, between more liberal and more conservative, and so forth, the majority of respondents in each demographic category are willing to make the commitment to the expressed values and imagined community. This is a very optimistic and hopeful finding; there is considerable desire for a global community even among those who might be generally conservative in their political outlook. We divide the remainder of our discussion into two areas: implications for further research and implications for further action.

While this research aimed to discover the basic categories of actions, supports and barriers to taking those actions, further research is needed to better understand the factors contributing to one's willingness to act on one's value or not. Understanding ways to strengthen the attitude behavior connection would be useful: in particular, based in part of the work of Kruglanski, et.al. (2015), the way that one's goals (proximal and distal) embodied by the different actions can mediate the connection between one's commitment and one's actions would provide useful guidance on ways of building a global community.

In terms of action, our research points to clear areas upon which to build opportunities for action. Specifically, findings imply that despite an individual's commitment, there is a lack of clear knowledge of what to do, what actions one could take to further one's commitment. For example, among those interested in being part of the global human community, there is a strong desire to connect with others, to share ideas and to take concrete action. However, most do not know how to go about this, how to connect with others with similar interests, what actions they may take to further the development of this community and how they may learn of additional actions to take. Building on this idea also draws from our findings about obstacles people face in taking action. One of the primary sets of obstacles included a perceived lack of social support from others. Without knowledge of what others are doing, or how to connect with others with similar interests, perceived isolation of one's beliefs appears stronger than in reality it might be. Part of this may be alleviated through increased opportunities for connecting with others who are also eager to further their commitment to take action.

The identification and development of opportunities to offer suggestions to connect people with others who have similar knowledge or expertise in particular action areas would be beneficial. For example, Ami Dar, the creator of Idealist.org offers a social action platform that has been developed for connecting individuals interested in getting ideas for action to support their commitment; to sharing one's own actions with others; and working with others with similar action interests, or simply connecting virtually with other members of the global community (Watson, 2014). In addition, such a platform would also enable Imagine a Global Human Community to be shared widely throughout the world. Our hope is that we can develop tools and vehicles to spark widespread connection and support among the people of our

planet; and to engage with each other in ways that develop, grow and strengthen our global human community. The creation of an interactive web platform would be a worthwhile next step.

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